NASA News

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

Goddard Space Flight Center
Wallops Flight Facility
Wallops Island, VA 23337-5099

For Release:
July 12, 2005

Keith Koehler
NASA Wallops Flight Facility, Va.
Telephone: 757-824-1579
Keith.A.Koehler@nasa.gov

Linda McCarty
National Federation of the Blind, Md.
Telephone: 410-659-9314
lmccarty@nfb.org

RELEASE NO: 05 – 17

Blind Students Experience Careers in Rocket Science

Twelve blind high school students from across the United States are experiencing careers as rocket scientists July 15 through 23 as part of a partnership between NASA and the National Federation of the Blind (NFB).

The students will be participating in a program called “Rocket On!, a week-long rocket science academy of the NFB Jernigan Institute in Baltimore.

NASA and NFB instructors will present workshops at the Institute on the history of rocketry, basic rocket physics, and basic electronics. In addition, the students will learn basic rocket trajectory planning, build electronic circuits for the sensors they will fly, and practice pad operations for the rocket they will launch July 20 from NASA’s Wallops Flight Facility, Wallops Island, Va.

“This is the second year NASA has supported the NFB Rocket On! camp,” said Phil Eberspeaker, Chief of the NASA Sounding Rockets Program Office at Wallops. “We are looking forward to challenging these students to showcase their potential as possible future employees of NASA.”

-more-

“This is an extremely rewarding camp for all those involved – the students and the NASA employees,” Eberspeaker said.

“Through the NFB, these students receive mentoring and guidance from blind adults who demonstrate that blindness need not limit your dreams,” said Mark Riccobono, Director of Education for the NFB Jernigan Institute. ”Our programs are built by the blind, thus, they include an imaginative sense of adventure that most people falsely believe is beyond the reach of the blind. Through our partnership with NASA we are demonstrating that blind youth will be an active force in the next generation of leaders,” he said.

While at Wallops on July 18 and 19, the students will participate in a launch review with NASA personnel, integrate their experiments with NASA support systems, and conduct a practice countdown.

Reporting for work at 4:30 a.m., July 20, the students will begin the countdown procedures towards a 6 a.m. launch of the 10.5 foot rocket. The launch window is 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. The backup launch day is July 21.

During the countdown, the students will be mentored by members of the NASA launch team. The students will support range safety, project management, radar and telemetry support, web cast, the test director, and the launch activities at the pad and in the blockhouse. One lucky student will be selected to push the launch button.

Through audible signals, the students will be able to determine the readiness of their experiments and the rocket. The student-built electrical circuits will allow them to measure light, temperature, acceleration and pressure during the rocket’s flight, which is estimated to reach 6,000 feet.

Later in the day back at the Jernigan Institute, the students will begin analyzing the data collected from the four sensors during the flight. They will present their preliminary results during presentations on July 22 at the Jernigan Institute.

The students are from Arizona, Ohio, New York, Georgia, Texas, Pennsylvania, Washington, Michigan, Colorado and Hawaii.

The launch will be web cast live beginning at 5 a.m. on the Internet at:
http://www.wff.nasa.gov/webcast

For more information on NASA education programs on the Internet, visit:
http://education.nasa.gov

-end-